

**AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING  
MINIMUM HOUSING STANDARDS  
FOR THE  
CITY OF LEXINGTON**

**BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LEXINGTON:**

**ARTICLE IV.  
Minimum Housing Code**

**Section 7.40. Finding; Purpose.** Pursuant to G.S. 160A-441, it is hereby found and declared that there exist in the City dwellings which are unfit for human habitation due to dilapidation, defects increasing the hazards of fire, accidents and other calamities, lack of ventilation, light and sanitary facilities, and due to other conditions rendering such dwellings unsafe or unsanitary, and dangerous and detrimental to the health, safety and morals, and otherwise inimical to the welfare of the residents of the City.

In order to protect the health, safety and welfare of the residents of the city as authorized by part 6 of Article 19, Chapter 160A of the General Statutes, it is the purpose of this ordinance to establish minimum standards of fitness for the initial and continued occupancy of all buildings used for human habitation, as expressly authorized by G.S. 160A-444.

**Section 7.41. How Article is known and cited.** This article shall be known as the "Housing Code" and may be cited as such.

**Section 7.42 Definitions.** The following definitions shall apply in the interpretation and enforcement of this ordinance:

- (a) Basement shall mean a portion of a building which is located partly underground, having direct access to light and air from windows located above the level of the adjoining ground.
- (b) Cellar shall mean a portion of a building located partly or wholly underground having an inadequate access to light and air from windows located partly or wholly below the level of the adjoining ground.

- (c) Deteriorated shall mean that a dwelling is unfit for human habitation and can be repaired, altered, or improved to comply with all of the minimum standards established by this ordinance, at a cost not in excess of fifty percent (50%) of its fair market value.
- (d) Dilapidated shall mean that a dwelling is unfit for human habitation and cannot be repaired, altered or improved to comply with all of the minimum standards established by this ordinance at a cost not in excess of fifty percent (50%) of its fair market value.
- (e) Dwelling shall mean any building which is wholly or partly used or intended to be used for living or sleeping by human occupants; provided that temporary housing as hereinafter defined shall not be regarded as a dwelling.
- (f) Dwelling Unit shall mean any room or group of rooms located within a dwelling and forming a single habitable unit with facilities which are used or intended to be used for living, sleeping, cooking and eating.
- (g) Extermination shall mean the control and elimination of insects, rodents or other pests by eliminating their harborage places; by removing or making inaccessible materials that may serve as their food; by poisoning, spraying, fumigating, trapping or by any other recognized and legal pest elimination methods approved by the inspector.
- (h) Garbage shall mean the animal and vegetable waste resulting from the handling, preparation, cooking and consumption of food.
- (i) Habitable room shall mean a room or enclosed floor space used or intended to be used for living, sleeping, cooking or eating purposes, excluding bathrooms, water closet compartments, laundries, heater rooms, foyers, or communicating corridors, closets, and storage spaces.
- (j) Infestation shall mean the presence, withing or around a dwelling of any insects, rodents or other pests in such number as to constitute a menace to the health, safety or welfare of the occupants or the public.
- (k) Inspector shall mean a Building Inspector of the City or any agent of the Inspector who is authorized by the Inspector.
- (l) Multiple dwelling shall mean any dwelling containing more than two dwelling units.
- (m) Occupant shall mean any person over one year of age, living, sleeping, cooking, or eating in, or having actual possession of a dwelling unit or rooming unit.

(n) Operator shall mean any person who has charge, care or control of a building, or part thereof, in which dwelling units or rooming units are let.

(o) Owner shall mean any person who alone, or jointly, or severally with others:

(1) Shall have title to any dwelling or dwelling unit, with or without accompanying actual possession thereof; or

(2) Shall have charge, care or control of any dwelling or dwelling unit, as owner, or agent of the owner, or as executor, executrix, administrator, administratrix, trustee or guardian of the estate of the owner. Any such person through representing the actual owner shall be bound to comply with the provisions of this ordinance, and of rules and regulations adopted pursuant thereto, to the same extent as if he were the owner.

(p) Plumbing shall mean and include all of the following supplied facilities and equipment: Gas pipes, gas burning equipment, water pipes, mechanical garbage disposal units (mechanical sink grinder), waste pipes, water closets, sinks, installed dishwashers, lavatories, bathtubs, shower baths, installed clothes washing machines, catch basin, drains, vents and any other similar supplied fixtures, together with all connections to water, sewer or gas lines.

(q) Public Authority shall mean the City Housing Authority or any officer who is in charge of any department or branch of the government of the City of Lexington of the State of North Carolina relating to health, fire, building regulations or other activities concerning dwellings in the City.

(r) Rooming unit shall mean any room or group of rooms forming a single habitable unit used or intended to be used for living, and sleeping, but not for cooking or eating purposes.

(s) Rooming house shall mean any dwelling, or that part of any dwelling containing one or more rooming units, in which space is let by the owner or operator to three or more persons who are not husband or wife, son or daughter, mother or father or sister or brother of the owner or operator.

(t) Rubbish shall mean combustible and noncombustible waste materials, except garbage and ashes, and the term shall include paper, rags, cartons, boxes, wood, excelsior, rubber, leather, tree branches, yard trimmings, tin cans, metals, mineral matter, glass crockery, and dust.

(u) Supplied shall mean paid for, furnished, or provided by, or under the control of, the owner or operator.

(v) Temporary housing shall mean any tent, trailer or other structure used for human shelter which is designed to be transportable and which is not attached to the ground, to another structure, or to any utilities system on the same premises for more than thirty (30) consecutive days.

(w) Unfit for human habitation shall mean that conditions exist in a dwelling which violate or do not comply with one or more of the major violation standards of fitness or one or more of the requirements established by this ordinance.

(x) Meaning of certain words. Whenever the words "dwelling, dwelling unit, rooming house, rooming unit, premises" are used in this chapter, they shall be construed as though they were followed by the words "or any part thereof."

(y) Board of Adjustment shall mean the Planning Board of the City of Lexington.

#### **Section 7.43 Minimum Standards of Fitness for Dwellings and Dwelling Units.**

Every dwelling and dwelling unit used as a human habitation, or held out for use as a human habitation, shall comply with all of the minimum standards of fitness for human habitation and all of the requirements of Section 7.44 through Section 7.49 of this ordinance. No person shall occupy as owner-occupant, or let to another for occupancy or use as a human habitation, any dwelling or dwelling unit which does not comply with all of the minimum standards of fitness for human habitation and all of the requirements of Section 7.44 through Section 7.49.

#### **Section 7.44 Minimum Standards for Structural Condition.**

(a) Walls or partitions or supporting members, sills, joists, rafters, or other structural members shall not list, lean or buckle, and shall not be rotted, deteriorated, or damaged, and shall not have holes or cracks which might admit rodents.

(b) Floors or roofs shall have adequate supporting members and strength to be reasonably safe for the purpose used.

(c) Foundations, foundation walls, piers, or other foundation supports shall not be deteriorated or damaged.

(d) Steps, stairs, landings, porches, or other parts or appurtenances shall be maintained in such condition that they will not fail or collapse.

(e) Interior walls and ceilings of all rooms, closets, and hallways shall be finished of suitable materials which will, by use of reasonable household methods, promote sanitation and cleanliness and shall be maintained in such a manner so as to enable the occupants to maintain reasonable privacy between various spaces.

(f) The roof, flashings, exterior walls, basement walls, floors, and all doors and windows exposed to the weather shall be constructed and maintained so as to be watertight. Roof shall not contain more than two (2) roof coverings.

(g) There shall be no chimneys or parts thereof which are defective, deteriorated or in danger of falling, or in such condition or location as to constitute a fire hazard.

(h) There shall be no use of the ground for floors, or wood floors on the ground.

#### **Section 7.45 Minimum Standards for Basic Equipment and Facilities.**

(a) Plumbing System.

(1) Each dwelling unit shall be connected to a potable water supply and to the public sewer or other approved sewage disposal system.

(2) Each dwelling unit shall contain not less than a kitchen sink, lavatory, tub or shower, water closet, and adequate supply of both cold water and hot water. All water shall be supplied through an approved pipe distribution system connected to a potable water supply.

(3) All plumbing fixtures shall meet the standards of the State Plumbing Code and shall be maintained in a state of good repair and in good working order.

(4) All required plumbing fixtures shall be located within the dwelling unit and be accessible to the occupants of same. The water closet and tub or shower shall be located in a room or rooms affording privacy to the user.

(b) Heating System. Every dwelling and dwelling unit shall have facilities for providing heat. Every heating system shall be of sufficient capacity so as to heat all habitable rooms.

(c) Electrical System.

- (1) Every dwelling and dwelling unit shall be wired for electric lights and convenience receptacles. Every habitable room shall contain at least two floor or wall type electric convenience receptacles, connected in such manner as determined by the City Electric code. There shall be installed in every bathroom, water closet room, laundry room and furnace room at least one supplied ceiling, or wall-type electric light fixture. Wall switch shall be provided within one (1) foot of door opening.
- (2) Every public hall and stairway in every multiple dwelling shall be adequately lighted by electric lights at all times when natural daylight is not sufficient.
- (3) General electrical system shall meet the standards set forth in the national electrical code or comply with the discretion of the Building Inspector.

#### **Section 7.46 Minimum Standards for Ventilation.**

- (a) General. Every habitable room shall have at least one window or skylight facing directly to the outdoors. The minimum total window area, measured between stops, for every habitable room shall be ten percent (10%) of the floor area of such room. Whenever the only window in a room is a skylight-type window in the top of such room, the total window area of such skylight shall equal at least fifteen percent (15%) of the total floor area of such room.
- (b) Habitable rooms. Every habitable room shall have at least one (1) window or skylight which can easily be opened, or such other device as will adequately ventilate the room. The total openable window area in every habitable room shall be equal to at least forty-five percent (45%) of the minimum window area size or minimum skylight-type window size as required, or shall have other approved, equivalent ventilation.
- (c) Bathroom and water closet rooms. Every bathroom and water closet compartment shall comply with the light and ventilation requirements for habitable rooms except that no window or skylight shall be required in adequately ventilated bathrooms and water closet rooms equipped with an approved ventilation system.

#### **Section 7.47 Minimum Standards for Space, Use and Location.**

- (a) Room sizes. Every dwelling unit shall contain at least the minimum room size in each habitable room as required by the State Residential Building Code.

Every dwelling unit shall contain at least one hundred and fifty square feet of habitable

floor area for the first occupant, at least one hundred (100) square feet of additional habitable area for each of the next three occupants, and at least seventy-five (75) square feet of additional habitable floor area for each additional occupant.

In every dwelling unit and in every rooming unit, every room occupied for sleeping purposes by one occupant shall contain at least seventy (70) square feet of floor area, and every room occupied for sleeping purposes by more than one occupant shall contain at least fifty (50) square feet of floor area for each occupant twelve (12) years of age and over and at least thirty-five (35) square feet of floor area for each occupant under twelve (12) years of age.

(b) Ceiling Height. At least one-half (1/2) of the floor area of every habitable room shall have a ceiling height of not less than seven feet and six inches (7'6").

(c) Floor area calculation. Floor area shall be calculated on the basis of habitable room area. However, closet area and wall area within the dwelling unit may count for not more than ten percent (10%) of the required habitable floor area. The floor area of any part of any room where the ceiling height is less than four and one half feet (4'6") shall not be considered as part of the floor area computing the total area of the room to determine maximum permissible occupancy.

(d) Cellar. No cellar shall be used for living purposes.

(e) Basements. No basement shall be used for living purposes unless:

- (1) The floor and walls are substantially watertight;
- (2) The total window area, total openable window areas, and ceiling height are equal to those required for habitable rooms;
- (3) The required minimum window area of every habitable room is entirely above the grade adjoining such window area, except where the window or windows face a stairwell, window well or access-way.

#### **Section 7.48 Minimum Standards for Safe and Sanitary Maintenance.**

(a) Exterior foundation, walls, and roofs. Every foundation wall, exterior wall, and exterior roof shall be substantially weather-tight, rodent proof, and roof shall be kept in sound condition and good repair; shall be capable of affording privacy, shall be safe to use and capable of supporting the load which normal use may cause to be placed thereon. Every

exterior wall shall be protected with paint or other protective covering to prevent the entrance or penetration of moisture or the weather.

(b) Interior floors, walls, and ceilings. Every floor, interior wall, and ceiling shall be substantially rodent proof; shall be kept in sound condition and good repair; and shall be safe to use and capable of supporting the load which normal use may cause to be placed thereon.

(c) Windows and doors. Every window, exterior, door, basement or cellar door, and hatchway shall be substantially weathertight, watertight, and rodent proof, and be kept in sound working condition and good repair.

(d) Stairs, porches, and appurtenances. Every outside and inside stair, porch, and any appurtenance thereto shall be safe to use and capable of supporting the load that normal use may cause to be placed thereon; and shall be kept in sound condition and good repair.

(e) Bathroom floors. Every bathroom floor surface and water closet compartment floor surface shall be constructed and maintained so as to be reasonable impervious to water and so as to permit such floor to be easily kept in a clean and sanitary condition.

(f) Drainage. Every yard shall be properly graded so as to obtain thorough drainage and so as to prevent the accumulation of stagnant water.

(g) Noxious weeds. Every yard and all exterior property area shall be kept by occupant free of species of weeds or plant growth, which are noxious or detrimental to health.

(h) Egress. Every dwelling unit shall be provided with adequate means of egress as required by the State Residential Building Code (Volume I - B of the State Building code.)

#### **Section 7.49. Minimum Standards for Control of Insects, Rodents and Infestations.**

(a) Screens. In every dwelling unit, for protection against mosquitoes, flies, and other insects, every door opening directly from a dwelling unit to outside space shall have supplied and installed screens and a self-closing device, and every window or other device with openings to outdoor space, used or intended to be used for ventilation, shall likewise be supplied with screens installed.

(b) Rodent control. Every basement or cellar window used or intended to be used for ventilation, and every other opening to a basement which might provide an entry for



rodents, shall be supplied with screens installed or such other approved device as will effectively prevent their entrance.

(c) Infestation. Every occupant of a dwelling containing a single dwelling unit shall be responsible for the extermination of any insects, rodents, or other pests therein or on the premises; and every occupant of a dwelling unit in a dwelling containing more than one dwelling unit shall be responsible for such extermination whenever his dwelling unit is the only one infested. Whenever infestation is caused by failure of the owner to maintain a dwelling in a rodent proof or reasonable rodent and insect proof condition, extermination shall be the responsibility of the owner. Whenever infestation exists in two or more of the dwelling units in any dwelling or in the shared or public parts of the dwelling units, extermination shall be the responsibility of the owner.

(d) Rubbish Storage and Disposal. Every dwelling and every dwelling unit shall be supplied by occupant with approved containers and covers for storage of rubbish as required by City ordinances. The occupant shall be responsible for the removal of rubbish.

#### **Section 7.50 Minimum Standards Applicable to Rooming Houses: Exceptions.**

All of the provisions of this ordinance, and all of the minimum standards and requirements of this ordinance, shall be applicable to rooming houses, and to every person who operates a rooming house, or who occupies or lets to another for occupancy any rooming unit in any rooming house, except as provided in the following subsections:

(a) Water Closet, Hand Lavatory, and Bath Facilities. At least one (1) water closet, lavatory basin, and bathtub or shower, properly connected to an approved, water and sewer system in good working condition, shall be supplied for each four (4) rooms within a rooming house whenever said facilities are shared. All such facilities shall be located within the residence building served and shall be directly accessible from a common hall or passageway and shall be directly accessible from a common hall or passageway and shall be not more than one (1) story removed from any of the persons sharing such facilities. Every lavatory basin and bathtub or shower shall be supplied with hot and cold water at all times. Such required facilities shall not be located in a cellar.

(b) Minimum Floor Area For Sleeping Purposes. Every room occupied for sleeping purposes by one (1) occupant shall contain at least seventy (70) square feet of floor area, and every room occupied for sleeping purposes by more than one (1) occupancy shall contain at least fifty (50) square feet of floor area for thirty-five (35) square feet of floor area for each occupant under twelve (12) years of age.

(c) Sanitary Conditions. Every water closet, flush urinal, lavatory basin, and bathtub or shower required by subsection (a) of this section shall be located within the rooming house and within a room or rooms which afford privacy and are separate from the habitable rooms, and which are accessible from a common hall and without going outside the rooming house or through any other room therein.

### **Section 7.51 Responsibilities of Owners and Occupants.**

(a) Public area. Every owner of a dwelling containing two or more dwelling units shall be responsible for maintaining in a clean and sanitary condition the shared or public areas of the dwelling and premises thereof.

(b) Cleanliness. Every occupant of a dwelling or dwelling unit shall keep in a clean and sanitary condition that part of the dwelling, dwelling unit, and premises thereof which he occupied and controls.

(c) Rubbish and Garbage. Every occupant of a dwelling or dwelling unit shall dispose of all his rubbish and garbage in a clean and sanitary manner by placing it in storage facilities.

(d) Supplied Plumbing Fixtures. Every occupant of a dwelling unit shall keep all supplied plumbing fixtures there in clean and sanitary condition and shall be responsible for the exercise of reasonable care in the proper use and operation of same.

(e) Care of facilities, equipment and structure. No occupant shall willfully destroy, deface, or impair any of the facilities or equipment, or any part of the structure of a dwelling or dwelling unit.

### **Section 7.52 Duties of Building Inspector**

The Building Inspector is hereby designated as the officer to enforce the provisions of this ordinance and to exercise the duties and powers herein prescribed. It shall be duty of the Building Inspector:

(a) to investigate the dwelling conditions, and to inspect dwellings and dwelling units located in the City, in order to determine which dwellings and dwelling units are unfit for human habitation, and for the purpose of carrying out the objectives of this ordinance with respect to such dwellings and dwelling units;

(b) to make such action, together with other appropriate departments and agencies, public and private, as may be necessary to effect rehabilitation of housing which is deteriorated;

(c) to keep a record of the results if inspections made under this ordinance and an inventory of those dwellings that do not meet the minimum standards of fitness herein prescribed; and

(d) to perform such other duties as may be herein prescribed.

### **Section 7.53 Powers of Building Inspector.**

The Building Inspector is authorized to exercise such powers as may be necessary or convenient to carry out and effectuate the purpose and provisions of this ordinance, including the following powers in addition to others herein granted:

(a) to investigate the dwelling conditions in the City in order to determine which dwellings therein are unfit for human habitation;

(b) to administer oaths and affirmations, examine witnesses and receive evidence in writing;

(c) to enter upon premises for the purpose of making examinations and inspections; provided, such entries shall be made in accordance with law and in such manner as to cause the least possible inconvenience to the persons in possession; and

(d) to appoint and fix the duties of such officers, agents, and employees as he deems necessary to carry out the purposes of this ordinance.

### **Section 7.54 Inspections; Duty of Owner and Occupants:**

For the purpose of making inspections, the Inspector is hereby authorized to enter, examine, and survey at all reasonable times all dwellings, dwelling units, rooming units and premises.

The owner or occupant of every dwelling, dwelling unit, or rooming unit, or the person in charge thereof, shall give the Inspector free access to such dwelling, dwelling unit, or rooming unit, and its premises at all reasonable times for the purposes of such inspection, examination, and survey. Every occupant of a dwelling or dwelling unit shall give the owner thereof, or his agent or employee, access to any part of such dwelling or dwelling unit, and its premises, at all reasonable times for the purpose of making such repairs or alterations as are necessary to effect compliance with the provisions of this ordinance or with any lawful order issued pursuant to the provisions of this ordinance.

### **Section 7.55 Procedure for Enforcement.**

(a) Preliminary Investigation; Notice; Hearing. Whenever a petition is filed with The

Inspector by a Public Authority or by at least five (5) residents of the City charging that any dwelling or dwelling unit is unfit for human habitation, or whenever it appears to the Inspector, upon inspection, that any dwelling or dwelling unit is unfit for human habitation, he shall, if his preliminary investigation discloses a basis for such charges, issue and cause to be served upon the owner of and parties in interest in such dwelling or dwelling unit a complaint stating the charges and containing a notice that a hearing will be held before the Inspector at a place therein fixed, not less than ten (10) nor more than thirty (30) days after the serving of said complaint. The owner or any party in interest shall have the right to file an answer to the complaint and to appear in person, or otherwise, and give testimony at the place and time affixed in the complaint. Notice of such hearing shall also be given to at least one of the persons signing a petition relating to such dwelling. Any person desiring to do so may attend such hearing and give evidence relevant to the matter being heard. The rules of evidence prevailing in courts of law or equity shall not be controlling in hearings before the Inspector.

(b) Procedure After Hearing. After such notice and hearing, the Inspector shall state in writing his determination whether such dwelling or dwelling unit is unfit for human habitation, and, if so, whether it is deteriorate or dilapidated.

If the Inspector determines that the dwelling or dwelling unit is deteriorated, he shall state in writing his findings of fact in support of such determination, and shall issue, and cause to be served upon the owner thereof an order directing and requiring the owner to repair, alter, and improve such dwelling or dwelling unit to comply with the minimum standards of fitness established by this ordinance within a specified period of time, not to exceed ninety (90) days. Such order may also direct and require the owner to vacate and close such dwelling or dwelling unit until such repairs, alterations, and improvements have been made.

If the Inspector determines that the dwelling is dilapidated, he shall state in writing his findings of fact to support such determination, and shall issue and cause to be served upon the owner thereof an order directing and requiring the owner to either repair, alter and improve such dwelling or dwelling unit to comply with the minimum standards of fitness established by this ordinance, or else vacate and remove or demolish the same within a specified period of time not to exceed ninety (90) days. The Building Inspector has the authority to grant a thirty (30) day extension for good cause, not to exceed two (2) extensions.

(c) Failure to Comply With Order.

(1) In Person Remedy. If the owner of any deteriorated dwelling or dwelling unit shall fail to comply with an order of the Inspector to repair, alter, or improve the same within

the time specified therein, or if the owner of a dilapidated dwelling shall fail to comply with an order of the Inspector to vacate and close, and remove or demolish the same within the time specified therein, the Inspector shall submit to the City Council at its next regular meeting a resolution directing the City Attorney to petition the Superior Court for an order directing such owner to comply with the order of the Inspector, as authorized by G.s. 160A-446(g).

- (2) In Rem Remedy. After failure of an owner of a deteriorated dwelling or dwelling unit, or of a dilapidated dwelling, to comply with an order of the Inspector within the time specified therein, if injunctive relief has not been sought or has not been granted as provided in the preceding paragraph (1), the Inspector shall submit to the City Council an ordinance ordering the Inspector to cause such dwelling or dwelling unit to be repaired, altered, improved, or vacated and closed and removed or demolished, as provided in the original order of the Inspector, and pending such removal or demolition to placard such dwelling as provided by G.S. 160A-443 and Section 7.57 of this ordinance.

(d) Appeals from Orders of Inspector. An appeal from any decision or order of the Inspector may be taken by any person aggrieved thereby. Any appeal from the Inspector shall be taken within ten (10) days from the rendering of the decision or service of the order, and shall be taken by filing with the Inspector and with the Board of Adjustment a notice of appeal which shall specify the grounds upon which the appeal is based. Upon the filing of any notice of appeal, the Inspector shall forthwith transmit to the Board of all of the pages constituting the record upon which the decision appealed from was made. When appeal is from a decision of the Inspector refusing to allow the person aggrieved thereby to do any act, his decision shall remain in force until modified or reversed. When any appeal is from a decision of the Inspector requiring the person aggrieved thereby to do any act, the appeal shall have the effect of suspending the requirement until the hearing by the Board, unless the Inspector certifies to the Board, after the notice of appeal is filed with him, that by reason of the facts stated in the certificate (a copy of which shall be furnished the appellant), a suspension of his requirement would cause imminent peril to life or property, in which case the requirement shall not be suspended except by a restraining order, which may be granted for due cause shown upon not less than one day's written notice to the Inspector, by the Board, or by a court of record upon petition made pursuant to G.S. 160A-446(f) and subsection (e) of this Section.

The Board shall fix a reasonable time for the hearing of all appeals, shall give due notice to all the parties, and shall render its decision within a reasonable time. Any party may appear

in person or by agent or attorney. The Board may reverse or affirm, wholly or partly, or may modify the decision or order appealed from, and may make such decision and order as in its opinion ought to be made in the matter, and to that end it shall have all the powers of the Inspector, but the concurring vote of four members of the Board shall be necessary to reverse or modify any decision or order of the Inspector. The Board shall have power also in passing upon appeals, in any case here there are practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships in the way of carrying out the strict letter of the ordinance, to adapt the application of the ordinance to the necessities of the case to the end that the spirit of the ordinance shall be observed, public safety and welfare secured, and substantial justice done.

Every decision of the Board shall be subject to review by proceedings in the nature of certiorari instituted within fifteen (15) days of the decision of the Board, but not otherwise.

(e) Petition to Superior Court by Owner. Any person aggrieved by an order issued by the Inspector or a decision rendered by the Board shall have the right within thirty (30) days after issuance of the order or rendering of the decision, to petition the Superior court for a temporary injunction restraining the Inspector pending a final disposition of the cause, as provided by G. S. 160A-446(f).

#### **Section 7.56 Methods of Service of Complaints and Orders.**

Complaints or orders by the Inspector shall be served upon persons either personally or by registered or certified mail, but if the whereabouts of such persons are unknown and the same cannot be ascertained by the Inspector in the exercise of reasonable diligence, the Inspector shall make an affidavit to that effect, and the serving of such complaint or order upon such person may be made by publication in a manner prescribed in the North Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure in effect at that time. Where service is made by publication, a notice of the pending proceedings shall be posted in a conspicuous place on the premises affected by the complaint or order.

#### **Section 7.57 In Rem Action by Inspector; Placarding.**

After failure of an owner of a dwelling or dwelling unit to comply with an order of the Inspector issued pursuant to the provisions of this ordinance, and upon adoption by the City Council of an ordinance authorizing and directing him to do so. as provided by G. S. 160A-443(5) and Section 7.55(c) of this ordinance, the Inspector shall proceed to cause such dwelling or dwelling unit to be repaired, altered, or improved to comply with the minimum standards of fitness established by this ordinance, or to be vacated and closed and removed or demolished, as directed by the ordinance of the City Council and shall cause to be posted on the main entrance of such dwelling or dwelling unit a placard with the

following words: "This Building is unfit for human habitation; the use or occupation of this building for human habitation is prohibited and unlawful." Occupation of a building so posted shall constitute a misdemeanor.

Each such ordinance shall be recorded in the office of the Register of Deeds in the county wherein the property is located, and shall be indexed in the name of the property owner in the grantor index, as provided by G.S. 160A-443(5).

#### **Section 7.58 Costs, a Lien on Premises.**

As provided by G.S. 160A-446(6), the amount of the cost of any repairs, alterations, or improvements, or vacating and closing, or removal or demolition, caused to be made or done by the Inspector pursuant to Section 7.57 of this ordinance shall be a lien against the real property upon which such cost was incurred. Such lien shall be filed, have the same priority, and be enforced and the costs collected as provided by Article 10, Chapter 160A of the General Statutes of North Carolina.

#### **Section 7.59 Alternative Remedies.**

Neither this ordinance nor any of its provisions shall be construed to impair or limit in any way the power of the City to define and declare nuisances and to cause their abatement by summary action or otherwise, or to enforce this ordinance by criminal process as authorized by G.S. 14-4 and Section 7.61 of this ordinance, and the enforcement of any remedy provided herein shall not prevent the enforcement of any other remedy or remedies provided herein or in other ordinances or laws.

#### **Section 7.60 Board of Adjustment to Hear Appeals**

All appeals which may be taken from decisions or orders of the Inspector pursuant to Section n 7.55(d) of this ordinance shall be heard and determined by the Board of Adjustment. As the appeals body, the Board shall have the power to fix the times and places of its meetings, to adopt necessary rules of procedure and any other rules and regulations which may be necessary for the proper discharge of its duties. The Board shall perform the duties prescribed by Section 7.55(d) and shall keep an accurate journal of all its proceedings.

#### **Section 7.61 Conflict with Other Provisions**

In the event any provision, standard, or requirement of this ordinance is found to be in conflict with any provision of any other ordinance or code of the City, the provision which

establishes the higher standard or more stringent requirement for the promotion and protection of the health and safety of the residents of the City shall prevail.

#### **Section 7.62 Violations; Penalty.**

It shall be unlawful for the owner of any dwelling or dwelling unit to fail, neglect, or refuse to repair, alter, or improve the same, or to vacate and close and remove or demolish the same, upon order of the Inspector duly made and served as herein provided, within the time specified in such order, and each day that any such failure, neglect, or refusal to comply with such order continues shall constitute a separate and distinct offense. It shall be unlawful for the owner of any dwelling or dwelling unit, with respect to which an order has been issued pursuant to Section 7.55 of this ordinance, to occupy or permit the occupancy of the same after the time prescribed in such order for its repair, alteration or improvement or its vacation an closing, and each day that such occupancy continues after such prescribed time shall constitute a separate and distinct offense.

The violation of any provision of this ordinance shall constitute a misdemeanor, as provided by G.S. 14-4.

#### **Section 7.63 Severability.**

If any provision of this ordinance is for any reason held to be invalid or unconstitutional by any court of competent jurisdiction, such provision shall be deemed a separate, independent provision and such holding shall not affect the validity of any other provision hereof, and to that end, the provisions of this ordinance are hereby declared to be severable.

#### **Section 7.64 Jurisdiction.**

The provisions of this Article are applicable to all residential buildings and accessory structures within the City Limits and environs, as now or hereafter fixed. Demountable buildings or structures, when used or intended for the use of human habitation, shall be subject to the applicable provisions of this Article.

#### **Section 7.65 Administrative Liability.**

Except as may otherwise be provided by statute or local law or ordinance, no officer, agent, or employee of the municipality charged with the enforcement of the housing code shall be personally liable for any damage that may accrue to persons or property as a result of any



act required or permitted in the discharge of his duties under this code. No person who institutes or assists in the prosecution of, a criminal proceeding under this code shall be liable to damages hereunder unless he acted with malice and without reasonable grounds for believing that the person accused was guilty of an unlawful act or omission.